

A LETTER TO JEFFREY "FREE" LUERS FROM LORENZO KOM'BOA ERVIN, FORMER BLACK PANTHER

Hello Free:

I have been where you are now: as a young man (then 21 years old) facing the rest of my life in prison. Sentenced to "natural life" imprisonment, which was supposed to ensure that I would never get out of prison except when I expire, but guess what? I didn't die, and I did get out much sooner than everyone expected. Don't get me wrong, I spent almost 15 long years in prison, and was subjected to every form of terrorism and brutality that the state could throw at me. I spent nine years in solitary confinement and control units. I was beaten and tortured, starved and whipped. They wanted to break me, and to see me crawl. Instead, I decided on resistance by any means possible. If there was a riot, I would lead it; if there was an escape, I would be part of it; if there was a strike, I was calling for the most extreme measures: all forms of struggle was what I lived for and was prepared to die for.

Don't get me wrong, I was no hero, and I sure as hell would have lied to have been somewhere else, but, just like you, I understand why it is so important to defy your captors, even while you fight to survive, literally in hell. I was no hero or "special person," and it was because I had an international support campaign, the Anarchist Black Cross, APOTOC (Help A Prisoner Oppose Torture Committee), and various segments of the left and even liberal movements around the world, that I was freed from captivity. It wasn't what the warden wanted, and the parole officials promised me that I would be imprisoned "forever" because of a prison riot in the wake of the 1971 Attica rebellion and slaughter. Several guards were severely injured, and I was made the scapegoat, and given an additional 30 years. This was what I faced, and yet I got out in 1983, and been raising hell ever since.

What does this mean? That you can struggle and you can survive. More importantly, an effective campaign could free you as well, no matter the circumstances you are now under. Hell, the international support campaign is all that has kept Mumia Abu-Jamal alive and now improved his chances of being finally released, not smart lawyers. Hell, his trial lawyer fell asleep at trial and his first team of "civil rights" lawyers sold him out for fame and glory, provided by a book deal.

You sound like your spirits are strong, and I am sure they are. We will do all we can out here to overturn your unjust conviction. I am due to come to Eugene to speak on your behalf this Fall, and hopefully raise money for your defense committee. You are actually in much better shape than I was when I first went to prison. I had no source of help because the government had already crushed the Left by the early 1970's. Things may seem daunting now, they were worse then. But I learned that the movement in the streets determines whether you languish in prison or are released, not the State. If it becomes strong enough it can compel a favorable outcome, even if the officials swear that you will be executed or die in prison. We must fight hard for you and all political prisoners, especially those who have been confined for decades. We must defeat this racist, corrupt government. Prison, where is thy victory?

Love and struggle,
Lorenzo Komboa Ervin

Biography of Jeffrey "Free" Luers

My name is Jeffrey Luers. Most of my friends call me "Free". I have been active since 1996 fighting for a range of issues such as animal rights, gender equality, anti fascism, eco-defense and others. These issues are not separate they are one struggle, one fight. My story is only a small part of a greater whole. . .

In my lifetime I have witnessed an onslaught against the inhabitants of this world lead by the greed of industrialized nations. It is my belief that the oppression of people is rooted in the oppression and exploitation of nature. A fundamental disrespect for life that began with the conquest of Mother Nature and has lead to the conquest of humankind.

I struck back. In an act of resistance designated to raise awareness and draw attention to a problem that affects every human being, every animal, every plant, and every form of life on this planet. I am speaking of global warming, air, soil and water pollution. We are in the midst of a global environmental crisis.

On June 16, 2000 I ignited a fire that would forever change my life. I torched 3 SUV's. I took extra care and used specific fuels to ensure no one would be injured.

Approximately 30 minutes after the fire was lit and extinguished, I was taken into custody by 3 undercover agents who had been following me, one of whom I would later learn to be a member of an anti-domestic terrorist unit. I was arrested on Criminal Mischief One, a charge that carries about one year. In the course of one week that charge would multiply into 10 felony counts, including 3 counts of Arson One.

Getting to trial took the course of a year. By trial I had accumulated 13 felony counts, now including conspiracy with persons unknown. I was looking at a little over 100 years. I refused to take a deal.

Trial was a joke, literally. We proved evidence had been tampered with, officers had lied and that the prosecutor had manipulated evidence to get a legal search. On top of that the judge refused to allow me to separate the trial. I had been charged with two different fires. Law requires that upon request separate offences must be tried separately. The final blow came when the judge threw out the testimony of my expert witness.

In the end I was convicted of 11 felony charges. I was sentenced to 22 years and 8 months. I have no possibility of parole.

This is only a summary of events that took place in the course of a year. For more information contact me directly or my defense network at:

Jeffery Luers: #13797671, Oregon State Prison, 2605 State Street, Salem, OR 97310.

Free's Defense Network: PO Box 50263, Eugene, OR 97405.

Free Sentenced to 23 Years!

By Gumby Cascadia of *Break The Chains* prisoner-support group

On June 11th, Jeff "Free" Luers was sentenced to nearly 23 years on 11 charges ranging from Arson I to Attempted Criminal Mischief stemming from two incidents last year in Eugene, Oregon.

Free had admitted to criminal mischief regarding a truck fire at Romania Chevrolet last summer. At the sentencing he read a statement taking accountability for the Romania fire, and emphasizing the care he took to ensure no one would be injured. He said:

"It cannot be said that I am unfeeling or uncaring. My heart is filled with love and compassion. I fight to protect life....all life. Not to take it. It's not an exaggeration to say that we're experiencing a period of extinction equal to that of the dinosaurs. 40,000 species go extinct each year, yet we continue to pollute and exploit the natural world... I will not ask this court to grant me leniency. All I ask is that you believe the sincerity of my words, and that you believe that my actions, whether or not you believe them to be misguided, stem from the love I have in my heart."

The judge responded by saying that he "never doubted Free's sincerity". He stated that Free's political beliefs would not influence the sentencing, that he would be sentenced "solely on the severity of the crimes". Yet Free received a sentence harsher than that of many murderers and rapists. We are not so naive as to say we're surprised with the sentence, but an analogy I shared with Free on the phone yesterday is that we've had someone with a clenched fist standing in front of us for a year saying "I'm going to punch you." Even though we were expecting it, it still took our breath away. The judge made many comments during the trial that indicated he'd already decided the outcome. He was often seen completely ignoring the testimony, typing on his laptop instead of listening. An appeal is already underway.

Frustratingly, throughout the past year, Free had been forced to remain silent about his actions at Romania Chevrolet, due to the fact that the State insisted on linking the two incidents, Romania and Tyree Oil Company, together. The judge denied many motions to separate the two. Free has stated and maintains that he had no involvement in the attempted arson at Tyree Oil.

The Legal Defense Committee asks for your continuing support of Free and Critter and other Prisoners of War. Make no mistake...a war is being waged on the Earth and all its creatures. Do not participate in the State's campaign to marginalize and incapacitate those who take radical action in defense of the Earth. Failure to support our political prisoners is tantamount to sanctioning repression by the State.

"Howl" for Free and Critter. Howl for all political prisoners. They will hear you.

In Honor Of Jeff Luers: 23 year jail sentence for an act of compassion
By Josh Harper

On June 6th a Eugene based newspaper, The Register Guard, reported that a man who killed a woman while driving drunk received a 10 year jail sentence. The man was given the sentence because the judge saw him as having no concern for the lives or well being of the other drivers on the road.

Six days later, the same newspaper reported that my friend Jeffrey Luers, also known as Free, had been sentenced to 22 years and 8 months for causing a few thousand dollars worth of fire damage to some sport utility vehicles. This disparity in sentencing is one we should expect from a society whose values are so predominantly capital-centric. Even though the judge admitted that Free had taken precaution against harming people, the value of those trucks has become more important than the value of life itself. Free is now 22 years old. He will spend more time in jail than he has already spent on earth.

The fire Free was convicted of setting was an act of compassion. The gas guzzling monstrosities known as SUV's slaughter more animals each year than the fur industry, emit fumes that harm the well being of plants and animals alike, and take us further down the path of a world without green spaces. As forests, grasslands, and other wild areas fall to make more room for parking lots and freeways, is it any wonder that people are beginning to attack the auto industry?

I've known Free for about 4 years. In that time I have seen him do amazing things. His dedication to the protection of wilderness is almost without peer. He has lived much of the time I have known him outdoors, constantly protecting forests and the animals that live in them. When ever we saw each other he would tell me about his latest arrest, jail time, or the harassment he was undergoing for his beliefs and actions. It seemed like it was never ending, but he never stopped. Even from behind bars he has stood strong and continued to urge others to go on the offensive for mother earth.

I know for sure that even if Free serves every day of his nearly 23 year sentence he will get out and continue fighting. He values life too much to ever give in and become part of a culture gone mad. While he is stripped of his freedom, it is up to us to continue fighting. His sentence cannot become a deterrent to us. If we quit protecting animals, wilderness, and each other out of fear of reprisal then we are cowards. Let Free's bravery stand as a testament to how hard our common will is to break. Don't give up, and dedicate your next victory to Free.

Update: Jeff "Free" Luers was sent to Oregon State Prison in Salem, Oregon to serve his nearly 23 year sentence. An appeal is being filed, but until then, letters of support, checks or money orders for commissary (envelopes, paper, stamps, fruit, etc.) publication subscriptions and other reading materials (direct from the publisher or amazon.com) can be sent to: Jeffrey Luers #13797671, OSP, 2605 State St. Salem, OR 97310.

Please be aware that he has been assigned "Threat Group" status, so be smart about what you send! If you are unsure if what you want to send may be damaging to him, you can send it to PO Box 11331, Eugene, OR 97440, and his friends will "screen" it for him.

Don't forget to include your name and return address on the envelope, or your letter will be returned. Letters must be written on clean paper with ball-point ink or typed. He is allowed to receive xeroxed material if it isn't copyrighted, color xerox art and photographs.

Write to Jeffrey Luers:

Jeffrey Luers #13797671
OSP
2605 State St.
Salem, OR 97310

For more info,
Contact:
BREAK THE CHAINS
PO Box 11331
Eugene, Oregon 97440